



PRESS RELEASE
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FIVE INDICTED IN "FAST BOAT" THEFT RING

Jacksonville, Florida - U.S. Attorney Paul I. Perez announced today the unsealing of two indictments charging five defendants with federal criminal violations related to the theft of high value, high performance boats and the transportation of the boats in interstate commerce. Ariel Martinez, Gilberto Garcia, and Manuel Moure are charged with conspiracy to transport boats in interstate commerce, to possess such boats, to alter the Hull Identification Numbers ("HINs") of the boats, and to fraudulently obtain titles and registrations for the boats. Two other defendants, Ruben Thames and Orestes Armenteros, were charged in a separate indictment for possession of stolen boats that had been transported in interstate commerce.

Martinez is a 30-year-old resident of Hialeah, Florida, and, if convicted on all counts, faces maximum penalties of 65 years' imprisonment and a \$1,750,000 fine. Garcia is a 32-year-old resident of Hialeah, Florida, and, if convicted on all counts, faces maximum penalties of 25 years' imprisonment and a \$750,000 fine. Moure is a

31-year-old resident of Miami, Florida, and, if convicted on all counts, faces maximum penalties of 15 years' imprisonment and a \$500,000 fine. Armenteros is a 54-year-old resident of Miami, Florida, and, if convicted, faces maximum penalties of 10 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine. Thames is 29-year-old resident of Miami, Florida, and faces maximum penalties of 10 years' imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine.

According to the indictment, the defendants were involved in a ring that stole the boats, along with their engines and trailers, from several locations throughout Florida and southern Georgia and transported them to the Miami area. They then changed the HINs (which are analogous to Vehicle Identification Numbers, or VINs, on automobiles), created documents falsely representing that the boats had been purchased new, and used this false documentation to obtain fraudulent titles and registrations for the boats from the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, sometimes in their own names and sometimes in the names of others. The defendants allegedly sold most of the boats for profit but retained some of them for their own use.

The investigation has resulted in the recovery of 38 stolen boats with a total value of approximately \$4 million. Five boats are specifically referenced in the indictment: a 31-foot Contender worth approximately \$115,000, a 35-foot Donzi worth approximately \$170,000, a 33-foot Hydra-Sports worth approximately \$180,000, a 29-foot Wellcraft Scarab worth approximately \$60,000, and a 33-foot Cigarette worth approximately \$130,000.

This case was investigated by a task force that includes the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Coast Guard Investigative Service, the Jacksonville Beach Police Department, and the Broward County Sheriff's Office. The case is being prosecuted by

Assistant United States Attorney Arnold B. Corsmeier.

An indictment is merely a formal charge that a defendant has committed a violation of the federal criminal laws, and every defendant is presumed innocent until, and unless, proven guilty.

NOTE: Photograph attached.

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